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ABSTRACT

In response to a growing concern that violence portrayed on television may have a deleterious effect on the behavior of viewers, a committee was constituted to develop an index which could be used to monitor the amount of television violence. In constructing such an indicator, careful consideration was given to its uses, since the use would determine the format of the indicator. Because the committee adheres to a broad definition of violence, it was thought that several indexes would probably be necessary, but that each would need to measure the frequency, the seriousness, and the duration of the violence. Types of violence, types of social actors, and types of programs would also need to be recorded. (EMH)

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A PROFILE OF TELEVISED VIOLENCE

REPORT SUBMITTED BY

THE COMMITTEE ON TELEVISION AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

OF THE

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

July 1975

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The effects of television on social behavior, especially on the behavior of children, has long been an area of shared concern by the general public, its elected representatives, and the scientific community. This concern has centered around several fears: First, the portrayal of violence on television might increase the incidence of societal violence through direct imitation and by conveying the message that violent solutions to problems are frequent, acceptable, and even preferrable. Thus, viewers might be influenced by television to perform violent acts.

Second, televised violence might influence people's social values and beliefs about society. Constant exposure to violence might make viewers indifferent to the suffering of others and accept violence in real life. On the basis of television programming, people may develop an inaccurate view of the prevalence of violence in society and of social relationships. This might lead to unrealistic fears and inappropriate or maladaptive behaviors.

Finally, the ill effects of viewing television violence may occur over a long period and may grow slowly in magnitude, even if short term or immediate effects are negligible. The negative consequences might not appear immediately, but many years later. This might particularly be true in the case of impressionable children and youths.

These concerns resulted recently in the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior's Report (Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence, December 1971) that appraised the evidence for a relationship between violence on television and children's aggressive behavior. In summarizing its findings, the committee concluded: "While the data are by no means wholly consistent or conclusive, there is evidence that a modest relationship does exist between the viewing of violence and aggressive behavior."[1]

As a result of hearings on the report before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications (March 1972), Senators Warren B. Magnuson and John O. Pastore wrote to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Elliot L. Richardson, requesting that "...[his] Department proceed in consultation with the Federal Communications Commission to develop a measurement of violence on television so that a report can be submitted annually to the Committee on the level of violence entering American homes."[2] In response to this request, staff from the National Institute of Mental Health and the Federal Communications Commission met with social and behavioral scientists on June 2, 1972 to discuss the development of measures of televised violence. The consultants agreed that the development of such measures was feasible and recommended that a non-governmental group participate in the planning and instigation of further research on measures of televised violence and on television and social behavior.

In January 1973 the Social Science Research Council submitted a proposal to NIMH for support of a Committee on Television and Social Behavior. The Committee was funded and established in September 1973 with the overall objective of planning and stimulating new research on television and social behavior. The committee set as one of its aims to conceptualize and give scientific context to the research required for the development of a multidimensional profile of violence in television programming. The committee has met six times between October 1973 and April 1975 to discuss the problems associated with developing a profile of television violence and to plan new research on television and social behavior. The remainder of this report consists of the committee's concerns about and recommendations for the development of a television violence profile.

Considerations

Despite the controversy surrounding the Surgeon General's Report, the committee agrees with the assessment that there are sufficient grounds for concern about the relationship between televised violence and violent behavior. However, several considerations should be kept in mind while developing a profile of televised violence.

First, the relative importance of television content as a cause of societal violence in comparison to other potential causes is unresolved. Television is only one medium, and violence in motion pictures and printed matter is often more

vividly portrayed than in television. Beyond the media, there are many causes of violence, and a constellation of factors over a lengthy period would have to change to create a significant reduction in societal violence. Thus, reducing television violence may have little effect. Moreover, the consequences of television violence are not so well understood as to suggest any reduction in research on these effects. This does not imply that no efforts should be made to reduce the effects of television violence, only that the relative importance of different causes of violence and the relative ease of countering them should be considered before countermeasures are implemented.

Second, by itself the development or publication of a television violence profile will not be effective in reducing violence on television. This depends on the use to which the profile is put and, in the last resort, upon the policy decisions of the television industry. If a violence profile is developed, its uses and impact by and on the television industry and the public should be evaluated carefully.

Finally, any set of indices may be used and abused. The uses may be coercive and restrictive or monitorial and educative. Efforts should be made to guard against the dangers of censorship that may accompany the implementation of a violence profile. This is particularly true in regards to any monitoring of nonfictional programming such as the "news." The committee recommends strongly that news and documentaries be excluded from the measurement domain of a violence profile.

Purpose of a Television Violence Profile

The committee assumes that the function of a violence profile is to inform viewers, producers, advertisers, policy makers, legislators, scientists, and others about the content of television. However, the committee realizes that the major options for significantly altering television programming rest with the television industry.

The committee's problem is to propose measures that adequately inform about the amount and kind of violent content in television programming. The measures should enable consumers and other groups, including television industry personnel, to differentiate various forms of violence on television. The committee sees an educative function in making the public and the television industry aware of what is being shown. Changing television fare is a large and complex problem, but not one that the committee is addressing. Whether parents then restrict television viewing or minimize some of the effects by ridicule or disapproval or some other tactic is a question of parental policy. Whether the industry is monitored by consumers or by other groups and how the industry might itself use such indicators is also a question of policy.

No resolution of questions about the character and format of a profile of television violence is possible without specifying concerns of the profile's users and the resources of the profile's developers. If the information contained in a profile is to be given wide distribution to the general

public, it should be relatively simple for reporting purposes and adaptable to the needs of individual families. Profiles for use within the television industry could be more detailed to monitor progress in implementing various changes in programming. If profiles were developed for research purposes, they would need to be even more detailed and to include information on the relevance of content to various characteristics of viewers. In sum, the construction of a violence profile is highly dependent upon the uses for which it is intended.

PROBLEMS IN DEFINING VIOLENCE

Commonalities in Definitions

The concept of violence is complex, and any attempt to define it seems to lead to dispute and controversy. However, some aspects of violence are usually discussed in most definitions of violence.

First, violence is frequently defined in terms of the intensity of the harm-doer's behavior. The term "violence" is often employed when the behavior is viewed as excessive, with the implication of violent activity as being unrestrained or wanton. Frequently, a value-judgment about the harm-doer and his justifications for his behavior is associated with labelling his behavior as "violent." People tend to regard behavior as "violent" when they believe it is "bad," employed for "evil" or "anti-social" ends, or "unjustified."

Within this perpetrator-oriented approach, distinctions can be made between instrumental and expressive violence and

between intentional and unintentional violence. Instrumental violence is done to achieve some goal, while expressive violence occurs without planning in a state of hate or rage. Thus, the latter is often a goal in itself, while the former is a means to another goal.

Intentional violence refers to incidents where the perpetrator acts with the knowledge and desire that his behavior will have dire consequences for his victim. He acts purposely to harm another person. Unintentional violence involves cases where the harm-doer does not know nor desire that his behavior harms someone else. Indeed, the harm-doer may have even attempted to benefit his unintended victim or he may have acted without knowing his behavior would have any consequences, good or bad, for another person. Both intentional and unintentional violence can be combined with instrumental and expressive violence. Finally, the concept of unintentional violence distinguishes "violence" from "aggression," which is usually defined in terms of the actor's intentions to do harm. Thus, unintentional violence allows one to categorize as violent those harmful acts caused by nonhuman agents, such as animals or natural events. Floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and the like can be considered to be violent incidents, since they result in harm to those in their path. The concept of unintentional violence draws attention to the need to consider both the perpetrator's behavior and the consequences of that behavior for their victims.

A second perspective in defining violence considers killing, maiming, and inflicting pain as "violence" because

of the magnitude of the effects from the victim's point of view. This would be true regardless of the human or non-human origin of the effect or regardless of the perpetrator's intentions, self-control or degree of exerted effort. The Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior had this victim-oriented definition in mind when it wrote:

> "In order to define violence as realistically, as ethically, and with as much psychological accuracy as possible, the definition should be broadened to include the experience of its victims. The physical and psychological violence experienced under circumstances...such as pollution, unsafe drugs, accidents resulting from defective equipment, restrictive or war-oriented legislation, etc...have been caused by the acts of other human beings...When a society legislates and institutionalizes the definition of violence in terms of victims, then all violent experience becomes a matter of concern. When the definition reflects only accountable destructive behavior, much, if not most, violent experience may not even be acknowledged."[3]

Three Kinds of Definitions

Besides these general considerations that might be applied in defining violence, three kinds of definitions or criteria might be used in identifying and profiling televised violence.

First, one might include in a profile of television violence only those televised portrayals that are known to have specific ill effects upon the audience. Such a specific definition of televised violence based upon careful empirical research would very probably be the most acceptable basis for a profile. But, there are problems in assessing "ill effects," their probability, their timing, the proportion of the population affected, the types of individuals

influenced and the seriousness of their behaviors. Although such an empirically based definition might be ideal, the current body of empirical studies on the effects of television are not sufficiently clear or inclusive to serve as a basis for the labelling of television content as violent.

Second, one might base a profile on the judgments of television viewers as to what aspect of television programming are undesired portrayals of violence. People can be asked to record their perceptions of violence, but people would not always agree. In addition, Nielsen ratings already show that many violent programs are not labelled "unpopular" or "undesired." It is probably true that most observers would have a fair degree of agreement among themselves on the relative levels of violence to be found in a set of television programs. However, differences in judgment would be clearly apparent and differences would be most common in the coding of individual segments and episodes.[4] In addition, our focus of concern is the relatively unsophisticated, young viewer whose judgments on these matters would be most suspect. Most adults would be reluctant to leave the judging of programs to children, and adults would have to do the judging for the children. This raises the problem of who should be permitted the privilege or the responsibility of making these value-laden decisions?

Third, violence could be defined in specific content terms with clear enough cues so that the indicators could be readily used by anyone, with a little training, who observes and can code a screened presentation. One could identify

weapons or observe the use of physical force, and it would not be difficult to identify willing or unwilling victims and so forth.

It is impossible to formulate a single definition of violence that results in agreement and meets all purposes of a violence profile. The specific content approach seems most feasible. The committee, therefore, proposes a rather broad approach to identifying violent content and proposes that other specific characteristics of such episodes depicting violence be included in the indicator profiles.

A Too Narrow Definition

One could list a number of events and obtain widespread agreement that all of them could be categorized as displaying or portraying "violence":

A bully drowns a young child

A woman is sadistically tortured by an intruder

A pedestrian is knifed by a mugger

A street fight among adolescents using chains, bats and blades

Ward attendants kick an old man into insensibility

A policeman is brutal

They are all violent crimes, and there is no commonly accepted justification for any of the behaviors. A person perpetrates the crime, and there is clear injury and pain to another, apparently innocent, person. The events involve death, serious injury or extreme pain, and the violence is physical (not psychological, economic, etc.). They all involve some aware-

ness, and perhaps planning, of what is going on (none of them are accidents).

If we had included "armed hijacking of an airplane with passengers and crew," many people would have accepted the categorization of "violence" even though death or injury is only threatened. Also, if we had included "a woman handing out poisoned Halloween candy," many observers would see "violence" even though no threat was expressed and no death or pain was observable -- the consequence is highly probable.

A core definition, to maximize agreement, could be limited to completed violence. But this would omit the consideration of serious and compelling threats resulting in almost certain pain and injury off screen.

A Moderately Broad Definition

Dr. George Gerbner in his monitoring of television content suggests a broader definition of violence. He defines violence without regard to its justification or condemnation, involving overt action and serious actual or potential consequences, and excluding voluntary participation or willingness on the part of the victim (which excludes violence in sports events). His definition is:

> "The overt expression of physical force against other or self, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed or actually hurting or killing."[5]

According to this definition, if a comedian says, "I'm going to kill you," this is not violent. But, if a cartoon character slams the door on another's nose, that is violent. If a woman is raped, and the television audience hears the sounds

of the struggle, but does not see it happen, that is violent. However, by Gerbner's definition just hearing a report about the rape is not violent.

Under such criteria as Dr. Gerbner's, there is very little recourse to inferential judgment in coding television material. It might be added that his definition does not necessarily require a human agent. It encompasses unintentional violence, as defined above, and therefore includes such acts of nature as a burning skyscraper, an earthquake, or a traffic accident.

It may be instructive to know that by this definition one study showed that television has aired from 5 to 9 violent incidents an hour, some stations going much higher, and that densities are particularly high in cartoons and on Saturday mornings and after school hours. Cartoons, for instance, may go as high as 25 to 30 incidents per hour.[6] This definition could be as readily used with duration measures as with episode counts. Gerbner has used this kind of approach and has increased his categories over the years so that he now reports various tabulations for killing vs. lesser violence, with various categories of program themes and settings and characteristics of committers and sufferers by sex, age, marital status, socioeconomic class, nationality, race, and role. Much of it is tabulated over a seven year span. His is unquestionably the most comprehensive research that carries out an accounting of these aspects of television content.

PROBLEMS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VIOLENCE PROFILE

Multiple Indicators Required

Assuming agreement can be reached on a definition of what events to include in the category of "violent," the question still remains as to what should be indexed about those events. The argument that it is practically or politically useful to have only a single index figure of televised violence is unconvincing because it completely overlooks the nature of the material to be indicated. The committee proposes that the purposes for a television measure of violence can only be met if the information carried by the indicators is considerably richer and more detailed than a single index would allow.

The need for multiple indicators of television violence is examplified by the inadequacy of a single crime rate index of actual violence. A crime rate index that added cases of larceny, murder, fraud, and malpractice would be nothing more than the total tally of known law breaking and would be insensitive to various changes in crimes or to changes in their definitions. If burglaries went down and murders went up the same amount, the index would show no change even though the crime scene would have changed radically. Weather reporting also provides a suggestive example. No one wants a single figure to index the weather. Even the casual consumer of weather information would like to know temperature ranges, and some people use pollution level, pollen-count, and precipitation reports.

Men in fishing fleets might check wind speeds and direction, and outside workers might be concerned with humidity and wind-chill factors. A traveler wants more than local weather data, and a plane pilot would check ground level weather and visibility and also the whole complex of weather conditions at various altitudes.

These examples from crime and weather reporting suggest that a single index would be an inadequate indicator of television violence. Consequently, the committee proposes that a profile consisting of measures of different aspects of televised violence be developed as opposed to a single index.

What to Count

After an acceptable definition of violence is achieved, one indicator of violence could be a simple counting of the number of violent acts per program or per unit of time. This would provide information about the density or frequency of violence on television. While informative, a measure based solely on the frequency of violence would not be adequate by itself. Such an indicator would make programs appear less violent if episodes were reduced in number, but drawn out in time.

A complementary indicator to density would be to clock the minutes devoted to violence as a proportion of total program time (excluding commercials). But, such a duration measure would not be without its difficulties. For example, there is some ambiguity as to when violence begins. A shot

or stabbing takes only a second, but the violent "episode" surely includes part of the build-up and preparation, the period of threat and stalking during which the violence is expected. In addition, a duration measure would not be infallible by itself. Programs could be made to appear less violent if the degree of violence were escalated while shortening the time devoted to violence in the total program.

Consequently, a measure of the seriousness of each violent act is also required. An episode's degree of violence could be indicated by providing coders with models or examples of levels of violence against which the aired episode could be matched. Perhaps a first attempt at developing a seriousness indicator might be limited to categorizing violent acts as "serious" vs. "not serious." The proportion of serious acts out of all violent episodes could then be reported.

The committee recommends a multiple indicator profile composed of measures of the density, duration, and seriousness of televised violence.[7]

Format of Televised Violence

Another problem to confront in indicator development is the format of portrayal of violence. Must the violence actually be shown? What if the actual act is off screen but actors' reactions are on camera? What if the violence is just described or recounted? How about techniques of presentation such as musical underscoring, zooming in to portray the fear on the face of the victim or the reactions of the aggressor, close-ups showing the "realism" of injuries and

the after-effects of violence? These and other techniques all add to the impact and emotionality of the portrayal of violence.

Although the committee has no specific recommendations on how to confront this type of difficulty, it believes this problem should be carefully considered during the development of a violence profile.

Programs: A Focus on Children

Most people, including the committee, are more concerned over television material to which children are exposed than they are with other programs. Consequently, primary attention should be given to measuring violence in programs with large child audiences and to reporting the violence profile in a manner relevant to this concern.

Some programs are targeted particularly at children, such as those aired on Saturday mornings and during the pre- and after-school hours on weekdays. Of course, children are not restricted in their viewing to "children's programs." In fact, about six million children between two and eleven years of age watch prime time television (7:30 to 11:00 p.m.) and are exposed to "adult programs." Consequently, the committee recommends, on the basis of information from the Surgeon General's Report,[8] that televised violence be measured during these hours:

Weekdays: 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 11:00 p.m.
Weekends: 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

This focus on the hours of heavy viewing by children

raises the possibility of weighting a profile by the kind of exposure a program gets. The user of televised violence profiles may, in some cases, not be interested in just an accounting of violence, but might be interested in the size of the audience exposed to the materials. Some shows that are aired very late in the day, for example, do not attract much of an audience, while others are widely viewed. One might consider differentiating profiles of "violence aired" from profiles of "violence received."

In terms of reporting the profile in a manner relevant to the concern with children, the profile should be reported separately by types of programs. For example, the amount of violence (i.e., its density, duration and seriousness) should be reported separately for cartoon programs, all "children programming," and for all "adult programming." Reporting categories should be developed in order to differentiate programs in terms of their exposure to children.

Sampling Times during the Broadcasting Year

The developer of indicators of television violence is faced with the question of when to measure television violence during the course of the broadcasting year. Given the logistical problems and costs of measuring and reporting data on a daily basis,[9] some choice has to be made to sample, say one or two weeks out of 52 weeks. In selecting sample weeks, attention should be given to their importance to the television industry and to their representa-

tiveness. The former refers to those weeks during which new programs are aired and/or during which important ratings of audience size are made by such organizations as Nielsen and the FCC. Thus, these weeks have important implications for the decision to keep or remove a television program from the air. The latter refers to how "typical" the sample week is in comparison to the rest of the year's programming fare.

With these considerations in mind, the committee recommends that two sample weeks per television season be drawn in which one week is a critical decision-making week (e.g., Nielsen rating week) and the other is a random composite week (i.e., a Monday from one randomly chosen week, a Tuesday from another week, a Wednesday from a third week, etc.).

Priorities in Developing a Profile

The possibilities for increasing the scope, coverage and detail of indicators of television violence are such that some priorities need to be set. The intended uses of the profiles set some priorities because too much detail makes the material hard to communicate and unusable. There are also financial limits. Developing a profile for every station or total air time would be prohibitively expensive. The major viewing times of children are proposed as the top priority and since no accounting can be continuous some time sampling will have to be used. We also propose that the profile be applied to fictional entertainment only and that news and documentaries be excluded.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions and Assumptions

We conclude that there is enough evidence on some negative effects of television violence to warrant the development and use of indicators of televised violence.

In constructing indicators of televised violence, careful consideration should be given to the intended uses of the indicators. The intended uses will influence the format of the indicators and the resources required for their development. The committee assumes that the purposes in such development are those of monitoring and education, and not censorship.

After exploring the problems associated with defining "violence" for the purpose of developing television indicators, the committee proposes a modified version of Dr. Gerbner's definition.

The broad nature of this definition shows the unsuitability of a single index of television violence. The evolution of Dr. Gerbner's work indicates the advantages of several indicators of television content. Going beyond his measurements, the committee proposes a profile with three components measuring the density, duration, and frequency of television violence.

The committee recognizes that any proposal should be feasible. Taken in full, the committee's proposals could become quite costly. We recognize that the degree of their

acceptance is dependent on the assessment of the seriousness of the problem and decisions on the resources to be committed to this activity.

Recommendations

In discussing the problems of developing a profile, the committee has already made several recommendations. In this section of our report, these recommendations will be collated and expanded. In making these recommendations, the committee assumes that the public's major concern is with violence appearing in programs to which children are heavily exposed. For these purposes, the committee has defined children as being thirteen years-of-age or less.

Aspects of Television Violence to be Measured. The committee proposes the development of a profile, whose three components are reported separately, as opposed to a single index figure. The three recommended components are:

(1)	Density:	Number of violent acts per program (or per unit of time).
(2)	Duration:	Proportion of total programming time containing violence (i.e., number of minutes of violence divided by number of minutes of total programming, excluding programming time devoted to news, documentaries, and commercials).
(3)	Seriousness:	Severity of violence reported in terms of number or proportion of "seriously" violent acts out of the total number of violent acts.

Although the committee recommends the separate reporting of each component, it leaves open the eventual advisability of combining the three components into a summary figure.

initially, the aggregation of the components should be avoided and should not be undertaken without prior research into the technical problems involved, the understanding of the profile by its users, the consequences for the intended functions of the violence profile, etc.

The committee suggests that the following other aspects of television violence be measured and reported, but not necessarily included in the standard summaries constituting the most commonly reported profile of violence (i.e., density, duration, and seriousness measures).

(1) Characteristics of harm-doers and victims (separate accountings by harm-doers and victims).

a) Sex
b) Age
c) Race
d) Nationality and/or ethnicity
e) Socioeconomic level

(2) Characteristics of violent situations.

a) Serious vs. comic
b) Effectiveness of violence in achieving harm-doer's goals and/or in thwarting victim's goals.
c) Location in historic time: past, present, future.
d) Physical location: domestic vs. foreign; urban vs. rural.

The above is not an exhaustive list of the characteristics of actors and situations that might be important in assessing televised violence. It is not necessary to include these other aspects of programming in order to have a profile of violence. However, there is much to be gained by keeping track of other aspects of violent episodes because they provide insights into the message-content of the aired material

to which people, particularly children, are exposed. If the purpose of a set of indicators is to monitor violence on television, it is of interest to know who is perpetrating the violence, who are the victims, and when does violence occur. This information provides the profile users with a clearer picture of changing patterns in televised violence than do measures of density, duration and seriousness by themselves.

Programs to be Coded. The committee recommends the coding of the violent content in all regularly scheduled and special programs aired on all of the major network stations and on a sample of independent stations during the time sampling period (specified below) except for (1) news and documentary programs and (2) commercials. Besides measuring violence during network programming on ABC, CBS, and NBC affiliated stations, non-network programming should be coded in a sample of stations selected to represent network-affiliated stations (in non-network time) and independent stations.

Time Sampling Period. As noted earlier, the committee suggests restricting the coverage of television broadcasting time to those hours in which children are likely to be viewing. On the basis of presently available data on the viewing habits of children (those 13 years-old or less), the following time-periods should be monitored:

Weekdays: 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 to 11:00 p.m.
Weekends: 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Developing a profile of the total year's programming

would be prohibitively expensive both in terms of man-hours and money. Consequently, a sample of weeks should be drawn on the basis of their importance to the television industry's decisions about programming and on their representativeness of the year's programming. The committee proposes that two sample weeks per television season be drawn in which one week is a critical decision-making week (e.g., Nielsen rating week) and the other is a random composite week (i.e., a Monday from one randomly chosen week, a Tuesday from another randomly selected week, etc.).

Reporting Categories. Besides reporting the violence profile based on the total sample of programs, various reporting categories should be developed. The density, duration, and seriousness of televised violence should be reported for programs falling within each category and subcategory. A few suggested reporting categories are:

(1) Types of violence

a) Intentional vs. unintentional
b) Instrumental vs. expressive

(2) Types of programs

a) Cartoon vs. noncartoon
b) Children's vs. adults' programs
c) Crime, police and detective programs
d) Other fiction programs (e.g., including family comedies, adventure shows, etc.)
e) Nonfiction programs, excluding news and documentaries, but including such programs as variety and quiz shows

(3) Types of social actors

a) Agents of social control (e.g., police, private detectives, etc.)
b) Criminals and other anti-social characters
c) Heroes and other "good guys" vs. villains or "bad guys" who are not agents of social control nor criminals respectively

(4) Types of television networks

a) Major national networks (NBC, CBS, and ABC)
b) Network-affiliated stations during non-network programming
c) Independent stations

Advisory Committee. The committee proposes that a technical advisory committee be established to serve as an overseer and consultant during the development and implementation of the violence profile. Either the technical advisory committee or a separate body should engage in evaluation research on how the profile is employed by different user groups (e.g., parents, television executives) and with what effects. Once a profile and reporting categories are developed, they should not be considered as immutable. Frequent evaluations of the effectiveness of the profile and reporting categories should be carried out.

Funding. As yet the committee has not specified the needs for research projects and further work in the area of television and social behavior or the types of indicators that might be valuable in such work. It is clear, however, that research-based knowledge existing today is not adequate for answering all of the questions and concerns raised vis-a-vis, in particular, the development of a violence profile or, in general, the effects of television on social behavior. This means that more research is required. Consequently, the committee is concerned that the funds for the development of a violence profile not be taken from those available for "basic" research. If a violence profile is developed, it should be funded by a regulator agency, such as the Federal

Communications Commission, and not by an agency such as the National Institute for Mental Health.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Gerbner's Violence Profile

Obviously, the committee's thinking about the development of a violence profile has been strongly influenced by the work of Dr. George Gerbner and his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania. Their systematic and longitudinal collection and coding of television content is now entering its seventh year and provides valuable information about the "world of television." In making its recommendations, the committee gratefully acknowledges its debts to Dr. Gerbner and his colleagues.

While there are similarities between the committee's recommendations and Dr. Gerbner's violence profile (e.g., the definition of violence), there are differences in terms of (1) the component indicators of the violence profile, (2) types of programs coded, (3) selection and number of sample weeks, (4) selection and number of monitored hours of programming per week, and (5) reporting categories.

Chart I presents a comparison of Gerbner's and the committee's recommended violence profiles. The entries are self-explanatory, except in the case of "Profile Components." Gerbner's "rate" and the committee's "density" measures are identical: both measure the frequency of violence per program or time-unit. Gerbner's "prevalence" measure is the proportion of programs containing any violence,

regardless of frequency or seriousness of violence. "Role" refers to the characterization of perpetrators of violence and their victims and is composed of several measures: (1) per cent of perpetrators out of all characters, (2) per cent of victims, (3) per cent of victims or perpetrators, (4) per cent of killers, and (5) per cent of characters killed; and (6) per cent of all characters who are either killed or are killers. Thus, to some extent, "role" corresponds to the concept behind the committee's seriousness measure (i.e., level of violence present), and the information about the prevalence of killers and victims is available from the supplementary codes suggested by the committee. Finally, the Gerbner Profile contains a composite "violence index" that is composed of a "program score" and a "character score." The program score is a weighted sum of the prevalence and rate measures, and the character score is a weighted sum of the per cent killers and the per cent killed from the role measures.[10] At this time, the committee does not recommend the aggregation of measures. Finally, Gerbner's "program content" indicator refers to the characteristics of programs in such terms as locale, time, tone, and thematic structure. Most of these are included in the committee's "supplementary codes."

Beyond the composition of the profiles themselves, Chart I reveals that the committee's suggestions are mainly expansions of the scope of the Gerbner profile. The committee recommends expanding the types of program monitored, enlarging the number of broadcasting hours, selecting different and more sample weeks, and reporting breakdowns of the profile by different categories.

CHART I

Comparison of Gerbner's and Committee's Violence Profiles

	Gerbner[1]	Committee
Profile Components:[2]	Prevalence Rate Role Program Content Violence Index Program Score Character Score	Density Duration Seriousness Supplementary Codes Characteristics of harm-doers Characteristics of violent situations
Programs Coded:	Network Fiction (dramatic) Regularly scheduled Weekend children's programs	Network and non-network Fiction (dramatic) Nonfiction, except for news, documentary, sports, and commercial programs Regularly scheduled and specials Weekday and weekend children's programs
Broadcasting Hours Monitored:	Monday-Sunday: 8-11 p.m. Saturday-Sunday: 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Monday-Friday: 7-9 a.m. and 3-11 p.m. Saturday-Sunday: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Sample Weeks:	One week in fall TV "season"	Two weeks per TV "season" One critical week One random composite week
Reporting Categories:	All programs Networks Cartoon vs. general Program types	All programs Networks Cartoon vs. general Program types Types of violence Types of social actors

1) Source: G. Gerbner and L. Gross, Violence Profile No. 6, December 1974. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

2) See text for explanation of terms.

Summary

Expert opinion, based on studies, indicates that there are some negative effects of the violence aired on television. Studies also indicate that there is some concern over this problem on the part of the adult public. Most of the concern and most of the evidence points to effects on children and youth.

People do not agree on what to call violence in a strict definitional sense but there is probably broad agreement on the bulk of televised episodes that are candidates for such a classification (though people would differ on whether they were bad or good or neither) and fair agreement on rough orderings of the seriousness of violence portrayed.

The nature of indicators of violence on television is heavily dependent on the uses to which such measures are going to be put. There is no clear specification of these uses and purposes and one can imagine several. We assumed informational uses involved in monitoring program offerings and educating interested parties in the violent content of television fare.

We have proposed a broad definition of violence and several sets of categories to serve as a guide to content coding and reporting. These categories could be fully elaborated for some reporting purposes and reduced or combined for other reporting objectives. In all cases, however, we propose a profile of program characteristics be reported rather than any single index. No single rating system or single

index labeling is proposed, but a number of profiles, simple or complex, can be derived from the indicators proposed.

The profile would provide information about the violent content appearing during those hours when children are likely to be viewing television. It is based on monitoring network programming and a highly clustered sample of aired programs from network affiliated stations and independent stations as sampled by two weeks of broadcasting per television season. Using the same categories, definitions and methodologies, any group could monitor stations or areas of their choosing and develop profiles that could be compared with those developed and reported by officially contracted organizations.[11] Producers, networks or stations could also use the profiles in researching and reporting their own products.

Much is still unknown about the consequences of televised violence. Indeed the same can be said about the consequences of any type of television content. More research is required to assess carefully the different effects of television; the differential impact of various aspects of television (e.g., the medium per se vs. its content); the social and psychological circumstances under which particular effects are likely; the characteristics of individuals who are more or less influenced by television; the social and psychological functions that television serves for different people, etc. These are major issues that are not yet adequately understood.

In submitting this report, the committee does not neces-

sarily recommend the profile as the most effective or even as an effective means towards reducing violence in American society. Given the existing gaps in knowledge about television's effects (as just cited above), it is questionable whether the production of a violence profile would contribute to a reduction in actual violence. The committee is well-aware that televised violence is but one of many potential contributors to violence. More efforts are required to weigh the relative importance of various potential causes of violence in order to recommend steps towards reducing violence. In addition, attention should be paid to the relative ease (in the sense of cost-effectiveness) of altering various contributors to violence.

If sound social policies vis-a-vis television programming are to be developed, an expanding base of empirical knowledge about the effects of television is required.

REFERENCES

1. Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior, Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence. National Institute of Mental Health, Rockville, Md., 1971, p. 9.

2. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Communications of the Committee on Commerce, The United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, March 21-24, 1972. Washington: The U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 374.

3. Surgeon General, op. cit., pp. 122-3.

4. Blumenthal, Kahn, Andrews, and Head, Justifying Violence: Attitudes of American Men. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1972.

5. G. Gerbner and L. Gross, Violence Profile No. 6, Philadelphia: Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, 1974, p. 5.

6. Ibid., pp. 23-6.

7. In addition to these measures that are standardized by "per unit time" or by "per program," it may prove useful to report the total number of violent incidences portrayed over time and programs.

8. Surgeon General, op. cit., vol. 4, pp. 142-3.

9. To monitor and code 75 hours of television programming, it currently costs Dr. Gerbner and his colleagues $62,594.

10. Gerbner and Gross, op. cit., pp. 21-3.

11. The BBC in Great Britain monitored the violent content of six months of all fictional television programming produced by BBC and ITV (excluding news and sports). Volunteers, who had some training, were used with two volunteers monitoring each program. This project suggests that a coding schema cna be used by local community groups to monitor programming in specific localities. Programme Content and Viewers' Perceptions: A BBC Audience Research Department Report. BBC Publications, 1972.